relating to customs and central excise was pending on that date with the Customs & Central Excise Settlement Commission, as it has been set up recently.

(c) It is not possible to indicate the amount, as this is to be decided by the Settlement Commission on finalisation of the cases. The number of cases pending for more than 3 years, 5 years and 10 years are 785, 319 and 31 respectively.

Privatisation of maintenance of National Highways

*29. DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to offer the maintenance of National Highways to private parties;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether his Ministry is planning to work out contract documents for implementing maintenance by private contract scheme;

(d) if so, the highlights of the contract documents;

(e) the details of arrangement for supervision, monitoring and evaluation by Government; and

(f) when and where the pilot project is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJNATH SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) This is to bring in savings in maintenance cost.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) to (f) Details/modalities have not been finalised.

Demand for Telephones

*30. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's current teledensity is 2.4 telephones per 100 population;

(b) if so, what is the present demand for telephones and likely demand, in millions, by 2005 as well as by 2010;

(c) how much investment in billion would be required during the above period; and

(d) whether Government hope to connect every village in India by telephones by 2002 particularly in Rajasthan and Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The present demand for telephones is 26.17 million (22.88 million working DELs and 3.29 million Waiting List) and by 2005 and 2010 the likely demand is expected to be 82 million and 174.3 million respectively including cellular phone.

(c) The investment is likely to be Rs. 4512 billion (112.8 billion US$) approx. upto 2010.

(d) Yes, Sir.

Progress of Cross Country Highway Project

*31. SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:
SHRI GAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state the progress so far made on the implementation of the ambitious cross-country highway project inaugurated by the Prime Minister at the beginning of the year 1999?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJNATH SINGH): 16 contracts have so far been awarded to for the upgradation of 220 kms. of national highways at an estimated cost of Rs. 670 crores.

Deduction of Income Tax on Interest of Fixed Deposit

*32. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the bank authorities are not deducting income tax on the interest of fixed deposit amount of larger sums as per the rule;

(b) if so, what action Government are going to take against the defaulting banks; and

(c) what action is proposed to recover the interest amount from the